



Creating a Positive School Culture

Arizona Regional Assistance Training Seminar

Presented by Arizona Department of Education and
RMC Research Corporation



Creating a Positive School Culture



Workshop Goals

1. Participants will understand the elements of school culture.
2. Participants will assess school culture using various instruments.
3. Participants will learn the research-based dimensions of school culture associated with higher levels of student achievement.
4. Participants will learn how to change dysfunctional school cultures.
5. Participants will learn what is involved in creating a learning organization.

Warm Up Activity:

How We Do Things Around Here

- ✦ Assume that a new staff member is joining your faculty in the fall and assume that you like this person and want him or her to be successful at your school. You meet for lunch during the summer and describe “how things work” at the school and what the person needs to know about “fitting in” your school culture.
- ✦ Make a list of at least five things you will share with the new person.
- ✦ Share your list with a partner.





What is School Culture?

Culture is...

- ✿ Basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of the school organization that operate unconsciously and address how members of the group should perceive, think and feel.



Assumptions become the basis of management and control systems that eventually perpetuate themselves.



Culture is...

- ✦ Deep, pervasive, complex, patterned and morally neutral
- ✦ So powerful that it changes people rather than the other way around
- ✦ Experienced by all members of the organization, influences behavior and may be described in terms of the values, norms and beliefs

(Tagiuri and Litwin, 1981)

Culture is...

✂ Weak or strong

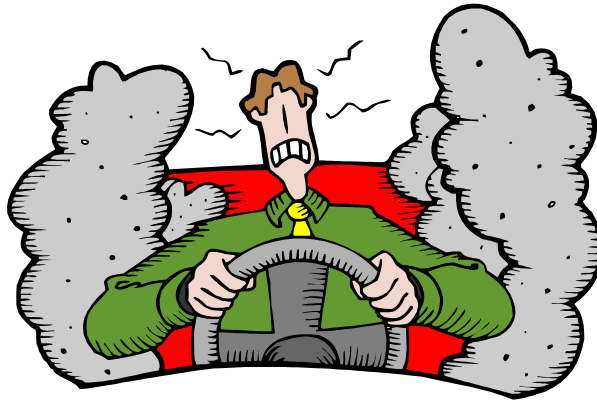
- Strong cultures are those in which members adhere to the norms most all of the time
- Weak cultures are those where members often ignore the norms without any apparent social sanctions

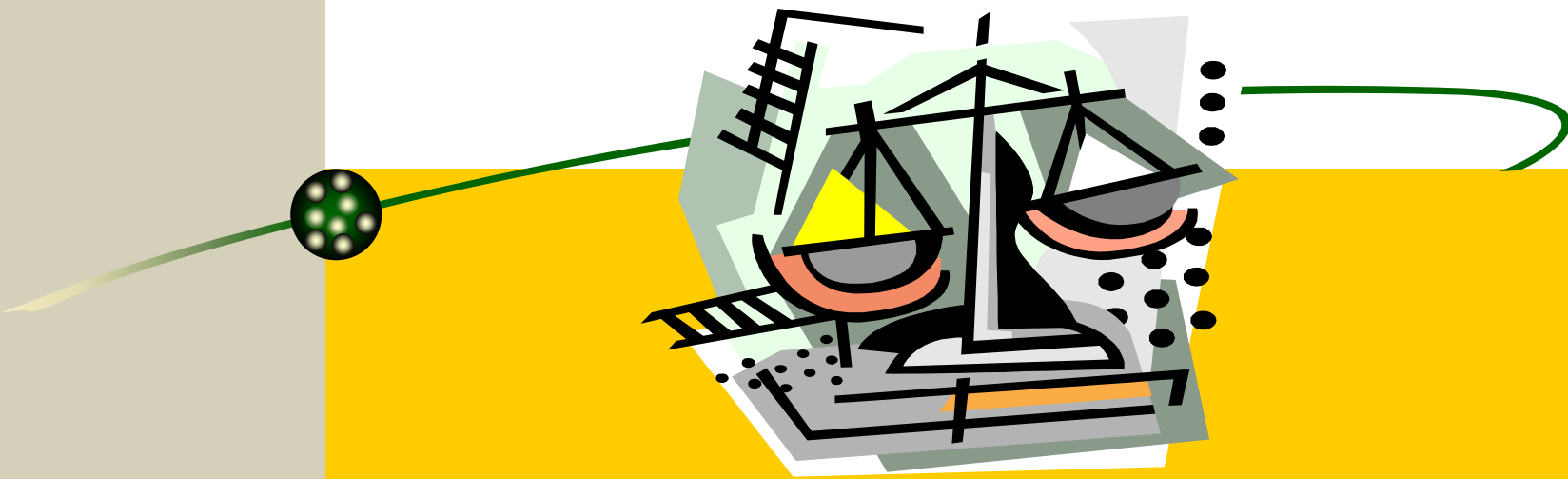


Culture is...

✶ Functional or dysfunctional

- Functional cultures facilitate the organization in meeting its goals.
- Dysfunctional cultures interfere with the accomplishment of the group's goals





Assessing School Culture



School Culture Survey

*“ School improvement emerges from the confluence of four elements: the strengthening of teachers’ skills, the systematic renovation of curriculum, the improvement of the organization, and the involvement of parents and citizens in responsible school-community partnerships. **Underlying all four strands, however, is a school culture that either energizes or undermines them. Essentially, the culture of the school is the foundation for school improvement.***

-Saphier and King (1985)

Effective School Cultures

✧ Collegiality

- A culture where staff members are psychologically comfortable and professionally supportive... a place where people have the tools and training they need and where they have opportunities to collaborate and learn from others.



Effective School Cultures

✧ Experimentation

- Staff is encouraged to try new solutions to problems and to experiment with new ideas and techniques.



Effective School Cultures

✧ High Expectations

- The staff holds high expectations for student learning and the principal holds high expectations for staff teaching.





Effective School Cultures

✦ Trust and Confidence

- The single factor common to successful school change is that relationships improve. If relationships improve, schools get better.
- Trust and confidence are outcomes when people follow-through on their commitments and provide one another with meaningful feedback.



Effective School Cultures

Tangible Support

- The principal supports and sustains growth by providing the time and resources for staff to develop and put into operation the knowledge and skills required to promote student achievement.
- Professional development is ongoing, job embedded, and sensitive to teachers' needs.



Effective School Cultures

✧ Reach out to the knowledge base

- The school is a learning organization. Staff members access knowledge bases concerning how students learn, research-based best practices, and discipline-based innovations.
- Teachers continually broaden their repertoires in relevant areas and align their instruction and curriculum with students' needs.

Effective School Cultures

✧ Appreciation and Recognition

- Good teaching is honored in both the school and community through both informal and formal ceremonies and rituals.



Effective School Cultures

✧ Caring, Celebration, and Humor

- Staff members care for one another and are aware of significant events in each other's lives as well as milestones in the life of the school.



Effective School Cultures

✧ Involvement in Decision-making

- Shared decision-making is practiced; parents, staff members and students are involved in making decisions that affect student learning and behavior.
- People support what they help create.





Effective School Cultures

✂ Protection of what's important

- Everyone protects the non-negotiable requirements for effective teaching and learning to occur.
- Staff have sufficient planning time, professional development resources and instructional materials.

Effective School Cultures

✧ Traditions

- The school regularly plans events that staff and students see as refreshing, challenging, or a definite change of pace; ultimately these events become a positive part of the productive traditions of the school.



Effective School Cultures

✶ Honest, open communication

- People in the school “speak plainly.” Plain speaking begins and ends with a systemic commitment to articulate and grapple with problems and decisions openly and honestly.





Pupil Control Ideology Survey

A 20 item Likert-type scale designed to measure
how educators think about student control

PCI used in studies including Denig (1999); Finkelstein (1998); Hall, Hall and Abraci (1997); Lunnenberg (2000); Morrison, Wilcox, Madrigal and McEwan (1997); Saad and Hendrix (1993); Shanker (1994)

Pupil Control Studies

- ✂ Conducted by Pennsylvania State University
- ✂ Began with an ethnographic case study of a junior high school in 1963
- ✂ Researchers discovered that pupil control was the dominant motif that permeated the school culture.





Pupil Control Studies

✂ Theoretical Base:

Service Organizations in which clients have no say in their participation— they must participate; and the organization has no choice in selecting clients—they must take them all. (Carlson, 1964)



Pupil Control Studies

- ✦ It is not surprising that in service organizations with mandatory participation and unselected clients, some participants may not want to take advantage of the services provided by the organization; hence, *control is a problem*.

(Hoy, 2001)



Pupil Control

The Model

Custodial Orientation



Traditional School

- Behavior is rigid & tightly controlled
- Maintaining order is primary
- Students viewed as irresponsible individuals who must be controlled by punitive sanctions
- Misbehavior viewed in moralistic terms

Humanistic Orientation

Learning Community

- Self-discipline and self-regulation; student involvement in establishing discipline code
- Learning and behavior viewed in psychological terms, not moralistic ones



Pupil Control

The Model, cont.

Custodial Orientation

- Staff views misbehavior as a personal affront
- Power and communication is unilateral and downward
- Mistrust, cynicism, impersonal

Humanistic Orientation

- Interpersonal relationships are close, warm & friendly
- Democratic
- Two-way communication
- Trust, open, optimistic
flexible, increased student
self-determination



Pupil Control & School Structure

The Model

Hindering

- Frustrates problem solving
- Promotes Control
- Rigid, punishes mistakes
- Demands conformity
- Fosters distrust

Enabling

- Facilitates problem solving
- Enables cooperation
- Flexible, learns from mistakes
- Values differences
- Fosters trust



The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform

-Seymour Sarason (1990)

✦ Power relationships in schools inform and control the behavior of everyone in the setting... the current educational system is based on control and distrust rather than empowerment and trust.

*“A sense of powerlessness breeds reduced interest and motivation, passionless conformity and even a rejection of learning. When a person— whether student or teacher— has no stake in the way things are, when the person’s needs or opinions are not acknowledged, when the person sees himself as the object of unilateral actions, it takes no particular wisdom to understand that the person would rather be somewhere else. **Students, and often teachers, see schools as uninteresting places where they are forced to spend time.**”*

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The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform

-Seymour Sarason (1990)

“When people feel that they have a voice in matters that affect them, they will have a greater commitment to the overall organization and will take greater responsibility for what happens to it.”

People Support What They Help Create



The Importance of Trust

“ Trust is the conscious regulation of one’s dependence on another (Zand, 1971)... a willingness to be vulnerable based on the confidence that the other person is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest and open (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999)



The Importance of Trust

- ✦ Increasingly, trust is recognized as a vital element in well-functioning organizations.
- ✦ Trust is necessary for effective cooperation and communication, which are the foundations for cohesive and productive relationships in organizations (Baier, 1986)
- ✦ To be effective and productive, schools, like other organizations must be cooperative, cohesive, efficient and well-managed (Glodring and Rollis, 1993; Louis, Kruse and Marks, 1996)

Trust is pivotal in the effort to improve education.



The Importance of Trust

- ✦ “ By designing organizations in ways that cultivate trust, organizations can reap the benefits of greater adaptability. Structural supports include creating greater interdependence, shared decision-making, policies that demonstrate an expectation of trustworthy behavior on the part of participants rather than an expectation on non-trustworthy behavior”

(Goddard, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000)



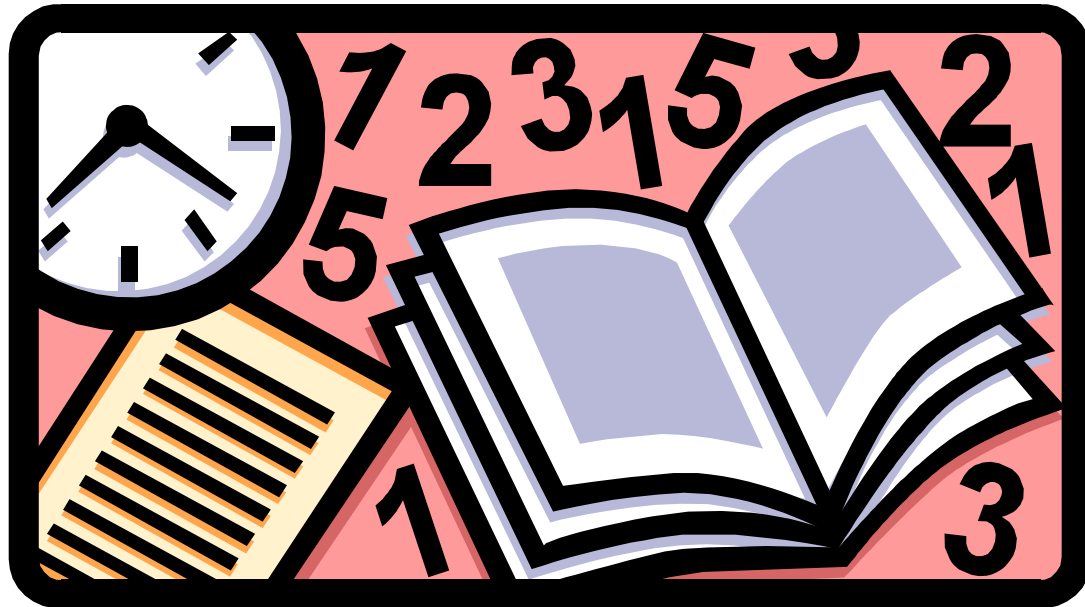
The Importance of Trust

✦ “Trust is sustained as people interact in cooperative ways and the trusting cycle becomes self-sustaining. Faculty trust has been found to have a direct impact on student achievement in reading and math– even when controlling for SES. Without trust, student energy is diverted toward self-protection and away from learning. A proliferation of rules stemming from a lack of trust causes resentment and alienation among teachers and students. Without trust, communication becomes constrained and distorted, making problems more difficult to solve.”

(Goddard, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000)

Determinants of School Culture:

A Quiz



Determinants of School Culture

✂ School Facility Characteristics

- Behavior and achievement is higher in schools that are clean and display student work (Rutter, 1979)
- There is also some initial research that indicates that landscaping the school grounds results in better student behavior when teachers, parents and students have all been involved in the process





Determinants of School Culture

✂ Safe and Orderly Environment

- Students achieve more when they feel safe and secure (Murphy, 1985)
- A second aspect is that the school has a systematic set of discipline policies and practices that have been developed with student and parent input (Murphy, 1985)



Determinants of School Culture

✦ Opportunities for Student Participation

- Rutter (1979) found that schools which gave students greater responsibility were associated with better behavior, increased attendance, less delinquency and higher achievement.
- The key is to provide students with opportunities to learn responsibility, practice leadership, identify with positive adult role models and learn the skills of democratic participation.



Determinants of School Culture

Use of rewards and praise

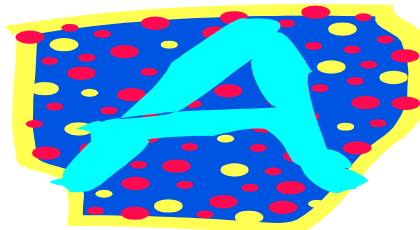
- Use of a clear, concise reward system has been associated with higher levels of achievement (Rutter, 1979; Wynne, 1980)
- Students should have numerous opportunities to be honored for their efforts in areas including academics, citizenship, participation, governance, sports and service.

All students should have the opportunity to receive awards and experience success.

Determinants of School Culture

✧ High Expectations

- A culture in which the staff expect all students to do well, believe in their ability to influence student achievement and are held accountable for student learning indeed increases student achievement (Edmunds, 1979)
- High expectations for staff performance, in addition to student performance, have also been associated with higher achievement (PDK, 1980; Brookover and Lezotte, 1979)



Determinants of School Culture

✧ Collegial Organizational Processes

- Open communication, shared decision-making, effective conflict resolution processes and collaborative planning are all associated with higher student achievement.



Determinants of School Culture

✦ Student-Staff Cohesion

- Good relationships between students and teachers has resulted in students working harder and enjoying school more (PDK, 1980)



Determinants of School Culture

✦ Staff Relationships

- Schools where staff appreciate one another and where they share and plan together are associated with higher degrees of achievement (Hoy, 2000)



Determinants of School Culture

✧ Home-School Cooperation

- Effective schools have a clear set of expectations for parents, structured parent input into school goals and decisions, and many opportunities for parents to participate in school activities, including instruction (Murphy, 1985; Epstein, 1997)



Determinants of School Culture

✦ Student Participation and Morale

- Student participation in decision-making and morale is associated with higher achievement and more positive self-concept (among students).





Determinants of School Culture

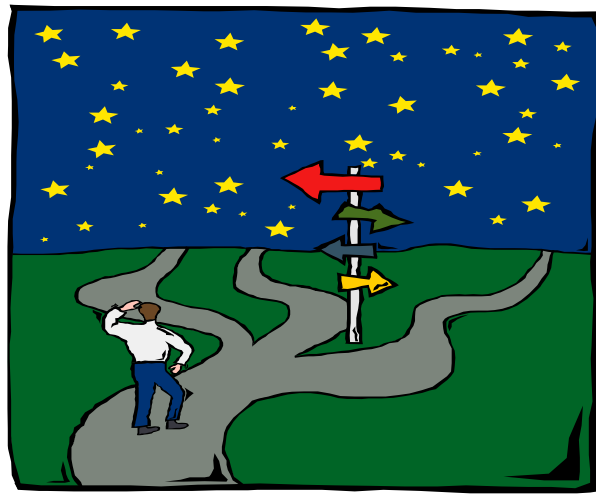
Productive Norms

- Schools where staff have positive norms for decision-making, handling conflict, exercising power and influence, interaction and support, communication and participation, problem-solving, leadership, productivity, and interdependence and expectations related to time and attendance experience higher student achievement.

Determinants of School Culture

✧ Instructional Leadership and Effective Teaching

- Schools where there is strong instructional leadership and the use of effective teaching strategies generally have higher levels of achievement (Berliner, 1984; Porter and Brophy, 1988)



Changing Culture





Changing Culture

- ✶ “ Changing the culture requires doing something ‘counter-cultural’; what often goes wrong in organizational change programs is that we manipulate some of the assumptions while leaving others untouched. For example, we might change the culture from competitive to cooperative but keep the old reward or accountability system.” (Kotter and Heskett, 1992)

Changing Culture

- ✶ “Strong cultures that are able to adapt have a set of interlocked and congruent core beliefs about the importance of people, the importance of meeting the needs of all stakeholders and the importance of learning and change.”



(Kotter and Heskett, 1992)



Changing Culture

- ✦ The first step in transforming a school culture is enunciating a set of core values and then providing support for the group members to live and behave consistently in support of these values. By enunciating core values, the school clarifies its purposes. The behavior most critical to supporting core values is the continuous and public display of *learning* by both students and adults. (Institute for the Study of Inquiry in Education, 2000)

Become a Learning Organization



Learning Organizations

- ✦ “ Learning organizations are organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free... learning is about enhancing capacity; it must be connected to action.”
- ✦ The learning organization is learning-oriented rather than control-oriented.

(Senge, 1990)



Learning Organizations

✶ The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization by Peter Senge (1990)

Five Basic Disciplines

1. Personal Mastery
2. Building Shared Vision
3. Mental Models
4. Team Learning
5. Systems Thinking

Learning Organizations

✧ Build a shared vision

Individuals must have their own visions before a shared vision can exist; I.e. people need to know what really matters to them– this is the difference between commitment and compliance.



Learning Organizations

✦ Personal Mastery

The learning organization is committed to the development of each individual's personal mastery.



Learning Organizations

💡 Mental Models

Mental models are internal pictures or constructions in our minds that we use to interpret and make sense of the world.

Mental models requires looking inward to discover implicit images and generalizations that we hold and the powerful effects they have on our behavior so that we can develop new shared mental models based on data.

In learning organizations individuals recognize and communicate their mental models through the processes of reflection and inquiry.



Learning Organizations

✧ Team Learning

Shared mental models of how we agree to operate... requires dialogue (not discussion).





Learning Organizations

Systems Thinking

Seeing beyond events to the deeper structures that control events and discovering the leverage that lies hidden within the structures. These “system archetypes” are “story lines” that keep recurring.

Systems Thinking requires new skills: seeing interrelationships, moving beyond blame, focusing on areas of high leverage and avoiding symptomatic solutions that focus on quick fixes rather than underlying root causes